

2 'Missing' U.S. Pilots Died Flying Downey Into China

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Two civilian American pilots who had been listed as missing on a flight from Korea to Japan in 1952 were killed piloting the plane that took CIA agents Jack Downey and Richard Fecteau into Communist Chinese hands when it was shot down deep inside China, it was learned yesterday.

The fliers were pilot Robert C. Snoddy and copilot Norman Schwartz. At the time of the crash, both men were employed by Civil Air Transport, an airline which flew covert air operations in the Far East for the Central Intelligence

Agency during the Korean war, which we have as reference in our files."

A State Department official said Snoddy and Schwartz were on the plane with Downey and Fecteau when it crashed in Manchuria in late November, 1952. Downey and Fecteau survived and were taken prisoner by the Chinese. Fecteau was released December, 1971, and Downey just two weeks ago.

"We have confirmed all this in private conversations with Downey and Fecteau," the State Department official said. "We also have a bulletin to this effect from the New China News Agency in 1954,

The State Department's admission that Snoddy and Schwartz were pilots for Downey and Fecteau surprised even former CIA men who have kept up with the case because of their friendship with Downey. For years, they had believed that the plane had been operated by Chinese Nationalists flying for Chiang Kai-shek.

For the last 20 years, the State Department has told the families of Snoddy and Schwartz that the two fliers were lost when their civilian

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cargo plane went down at sea on a flight from Korea to Japan. The State Department said that an "extensive search" had been made for the two fliers, but that they were "presumed dead."

The first hint the fliers' families had that this might not be the whole story came in 1954 when the Chinese announced the capture and conviction of Downey and Fecteau, who the Chinese said were caught when their plane was forced down attempting to supply a Chinese Nationalist spy ring in the mountains of Manchuria.

A year earlier, Snoddy's mother had turned in a small life insurance policy on her son that he had begun payments on when he was a teenage newboy in Roseburg, Ore., where the Snoddy's lived.

The policy was paid and returned with a copy of his flight plan the day he and Schwartz were said to have been killed. The flight plan for his C-47 aircraft gave Seoul as his departure point and Tokyo as his destination. It also listed as passengers on the plane J. Downey and R. Fecteau, who were described as Department of the Army civilian employees.

"When we heard a year later that Downey and Fecteau were prisoners in China we didn't know what to think," said Snoddy's sister, Mrs. John Boss, who today lives in Creswell, Ore. "Of course, all we could think of was that Robert and Norman (Schwartz) might be alive too."

Mrs. Boss said she and her mother wrote to then Sen. Wayne Morse of Oregon asking him for help in finding out what happened to Snoddy.

Morse wrote the Snoddy family saying he would pursue it further, but the Snoddys heard nothing more from the State Department.

"We still don't have anything in writing," Mrs. Boss said yesterday in a telephone interview. "We really think we're owed an explanation of what happened after all these years."

Oregon Republicans Sen. Mark Hatfield and Rep. Delenback wrote to Secretary of State William P. Rogers last Friday, and asked:

"Are Snoddy and Schwartz dead? If so, how and where did they die? Were they serving their country as employees of the U.S. government at the time? If they were, does the government have any legal or moral obligations to the families of these men since they were acting under the direction of government employees?"